

**TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - TUESDAY EVENING
MARCH 19, 2013**

PRESENT: Parella, Herreshoff, Calouro, Stuart, and Sweeney

ALSO PRESENT: Antonio A. Teixeira, Town Administrator
Julie Goucher, Town Treasurer

The Council met in workshop session on Tuesday evening, March 19, 2013 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, beginning at 7:06 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Parella presiding:

Councilman Herreshoff stated that the Council must remain aware that the Schools will require an approximately \$800,000 increase and that the Council should attempt to remain within the State-imposed levy cap. He noted that in order to do so, the Town Administrator's budget must be reduced by \$450,000 which is equal to 3% of the overall budget. He added that he believes that a search will allow the Town to remain within the cap and that he plans to provide a two-page memorandum to outline his approach to this issue.

Council Chairman Parella noted that Councilman Herreshoff's comments are welcome and that everyone is encouraged to provide an opinion.

404 - Town Solicitor

Andrew M. Teitz, Assistant Town Solicitor

Assistant Solicitor Teitz reported that the Solicitor's budget is not large in detail or size and that the Solicitor is seeking a 2% increase over last year.

He noted that the costs of healthcare, property taxes, etc., are increasing and that the Solicitor sought a modest increase last year and that this was the first time an increase was sought in five years.

A discussion ensued regarding litigation expense.

Assistant Solicitor Teitz informed the Council that litigation is billed at an hourly rate and that the Solicitor may not require the amount in the budget depending upon the case work and whether or not the matter must go to trial. Assistant Solicitor Teitz noted that the amount is relatively small considering the size of the Town and that he believes the budget is practical in consideration of pending cases.

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Council Chairman Parella noted that the Council approved certain expenditures in Executive Session concerning litigation issues and that the amount contained in the budget proposal is the same as the one previously agreed upon.

Councilman Stuart asked to know if the legal fees associated with Community Development matters were exclusive of these with Town Treasurer Goucher responding that those fees, outside of the normal Solicitor retainer, are contained within the Community Development budget.

Assistant Solicitor Teitz noted that for the Redevelopment and Historic District Commission the Solicitor would only be present if asked to attend the meeting but that there appears to be a more compelling need to be present at all meetings. He further noted that the Solicitor's every-time presence has been more cost effective overall.

Councilman Herreshoff asked about the increase in litigation with Assistant Solicitor Teitz responding that the Solicitor has tried to budget actual projected expenses versus the previous method of exceeding the budget with Council permission.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know how many cases go to litigation with Assistant Solicitor Teitz responding that most settle prior to trial.

Councilman Calouro stated that the Town has confidence in the Solicitors.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

**801 - Human Services
Edward Carusi, Director**

Council Chairman Parella noted that this budget is essentially level-funded.

Councilman Calouro stated that he spoke to Director Carusi and that he believes that the budget may be too low for what is accomplished.

Council Chairman Parella asked Councilman Calouro if he was referring to the Emergency Fund with Councilman Calouro

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responding that he was indeed speaking of the Emergency Fund.

Director Carusi noted that he utilizes the Emergency Fund as a "last resort" and that he is typically successful in making referrals to other funding agencies such as churches and public service organizations. He added that he keeps in close contact with these organizations in order to monitor the needs of his served population.

Council Chairman Parella agreed that it is important to maintain contact with these funding agencies to avoid duplication of effort.

Director Carusi noted that he "had to make a dent" in the Emergency Fund since heating assistance payments were late this year.

Council Chairman Parella asked to know the amount that might be suggested were the account to be increased with Director Carusi responding that he believes the account to still be adequate for the needs of the community.

Council Chairman Parella stated that she believes it to be prudent not to add to the account if Director Carusi is not asking for additional funds. She stated that she would prefer if a need should arise then the Council could consider it afterwards.

Councilman Sweeney asked to know how much of this year's appropriation of \$15,000 has been spent thus far with Town Treasurer Goucher responding that Director Carusi has expended \$4,500.

Director Carusi advised the Council that he tries to be judicious with the Town's appropriation and that he cannot predict the availability of funding from the social service agencies. He added that the circumstances of the situation dictate the response.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he appreciates that Director Carusi is not "simply grabbing" at the opportunity to be allowed a larger appropriation.

There were no changes made to this budget.

805 - Human Resources

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(BB) BVFD Emergency Dialers

Edward Carusi, Human Services Director, Program Manager

Director Carusi informed the Council that he tries to be creative with funding this program and has received grants from the Knights of Columbus and Roger Williams University. He added that some recipients gladly pay the cost which is approximately \$50 per unit. He added that some recipients will make a donation above the cost.

Director Carusi also informed the Council that he partners with the Town of Barrington, which has a similar program, and makes bulk purchases of the units to save money.

Council Chairman Parella invited Director Carusi to return during the year should extra funds be needed.

There were no changes made to this budget.

604 - Water Pollution Control

Jose DaSilva, Superintendent

A discussion ensued regarding the Department's debt service followed by a discussion concerning replacement of the RBC units through the State Revolving Fund (SRF).

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that the RBC units should not be operated together lest they all wear out at the same rate.

Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva explained that it is sometimes necessary to operate the units at the same time particularly when there is excessive inflow during heavy rain events.

Town Treasurer Goucher reported that the Town is speaking to BETA engineers about ways to equalize the cost of the units over their service life.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if it was possible to reduce electricity usage and cost with Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva responding that there was not much opportunity to save in electrical cost.

Council Chairman Parella stated that she believes the Water Pollution Control Department is an ideal place to locate a wind turbine and/or solar device.

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Town Treasurer Goucher noted that Town Administrator Teixeira is negotiating with National Grid. Town Administrator Teixeira added that he will speak to National Grid concerning this issue.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if the Town charges residents who are tied into the Warren system the same amount charged by Warren with Town Administrator Teixeira stating that he is working with Warren on the charges issue.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know about the increase in generator service with Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva reporting that the Town experienced a price increase.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know about the planned building repairs with Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva responding that the chimney needs re-pointing and that the building was constructed in the 1930s.

Councilman Stuart asked to know why the Overtime line was over-budget with Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva responding that this is directly related to coverage needed during storm events.

Councilman Herreshoff complimented Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva on his testimony, providing "direct answers."

Councilman Stuart asked to know the reason for the telephone costs with Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva responding that the telephones were necessary for the external monitoring system.

Councilman Stuart asked about the increase in uniform costs with Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva responding that the uniforms are a contractual requirement.

A further discussion ensued regarding various line items with the Council making no changes.

606 - Composting Facility
Jose DaSilva, Superintendent

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A discussion ensued regarding an idea to increase the sale price of recycling bags to \$10 per bundle. Council Chairman Parella asked Town Administrator Teixeira to investigate the bag situation.

A discussion ensued regarding sale of the composting product and the possibility of providing delivery of the composting product to homeowners.

The Council made not changes to this budget.

**607 - Enterprise Fund
Julie Goucher, Treasurer**

Town Treasurer Goucher explained the apportionment line.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

**806 - Municipal Observances
Fourth of July
Frances C. O'Donnell, Past General Chairman, Fireworks
Chairman**

Council Chairman Parella noted that the Town contributes \$75,000 for police and fire details.

Councilman Stuart noted that the Committee is requesting \$20,000 and asked the purpose for the request with Ms. O'Donnell responding that the fireworks cost \$20,000 and that the Town's appropriation is allocated toward the fireworks.

Council Chairman Parella asked Ms. O'Donnell if the Committee "can live with" \$17,000 with Ms. O'Donnell responding affirmatively.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

**Veterans Holidays
Louis Francis and Karl Antonevich, representing the
Veterans Council**

Council Chairman Parella noted what appeared to be an error since there was an appropriation in Human Resources also for this purpose.

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Mr. Antonevich commented that the Veterans were asking for a total of \$3300 and that their request is normally covered in the Veterans Holidays line item.

Patriotism (Flags)

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he would like to cut all of the various budget items but increase this particular one since it "pains him" to see bare flag poles.

Denise Asciola, former Administrative Assistant to the Town Administrator, noted that the Town has a supply of repaired flags and perhaps these might be used in the wintertime.

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that the Town might find a more cost-effective supply of flags with Ms. Asciola explaining that while Administrative Assistant she examined costs and found the flag shop on Thames Street to be cost effective.

Council Chairman Parella suggested that the Council might put an asterisk (*) on the Patriotism line.

Last Night

A discussion ensued regarding the Last Night activities. Town Administrator Teixeira recommended that the Council agree to have the event as it has been in the recent past.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

**807 - Senior Center
Maria Ursini, Director**

Ms. Ursini reported that she has been at the Senior Center since October of 2010 and that this is her third budget.

She reviewed her accomplishments to date.

Council Chairman Parella stated that Ms. Ursini does a good job.

Ms. Ursini explained that she wishes to have more hours available for her assistant in order to provide more accessibility.

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Council Chairman Parella suggested that the Center might open on weekends to attract "younger seniors" who may be working during the week.

Ms. Ursini stated that she was flexible.

Council Chairman Parella suggested that the matter should be given some additional thought.

Ms. Ursini noted that the Center is also utilized as a "cooling" center, listed with the Department of Elderly Affairs, during times of extreme heat.

Councilman Sweeney asked the reason for the new Miscellaneous line item including a request for \$600 with Ms. Ursini responding that these additional funds will allow for substitutes when employees are absent.

Councilman Herreshoff asked if the heat is operated by gas or oil with Ms. Ursini responding that the heat is by oil.

After a brief discussion it was decided by consensus that the Heat line item could return to \$4000.

Councilman Calouro asked about Ms. Ursini's request for a salary increase with Ms. Ursini responding that she believes that the requested salary is fair for the work that she is required to do.

Council Chairman Parella asked if this should be considered as a "step increase" or as a "reclassification."

A discussion ensued as to what would constitute a Town department and the structure of the Benjamin Church Senior Center as a private non-profit entity supported by the Town.

Councilman Stuart expressed concern regarding the establishment of another "department head."

Denise Asciola noted that the matter was considered in the 1970s and that the current structure was established. She suggested that the Council may wish to obtain a legal opinion.

Town Administrator Teixeira agreed to investigate the matter.

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Peter Hewett, of 11 Wendy Drive, stated that he did not recall a "search committee" for this appointment and questioned as to whether or not it met the criteria as a "department."

Council Chairman Parella stated that she believes it should be a department under the supervision of the Town Administrator and that perhaps the previous arrangement was outmoded.

Mr. Hewett expressed concern that a department head designation might command a larger salary.

Councilman Herreshoff agreed that "department heads" generally represented a larger concern. He suggested that the Town might find a more suitable term for those persons who are managers and not "department heads."

**405 - Boards and Commissions
Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force
Maria Ursini and Ann Marie Roy, Co-coordinators**

A discussion ensued regarding the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force (SAPTF) with Ms. Ursini distributing a survey to the Council. She noted that the survey costs \$5,000 to complete.

Ms. Ursini stated that the SAPTF has not received funding from the Town since approximately 2000 when the Task Force received a \$400,000 grant.

Town Treasurer Goucher noted that the Town provides in-kind services, including telephone and internet.

Council Chairman Parella noted that Town Administrator Teixeira recommends \$2000 and asked to know what it is for.

Ms. Ursini responded that the funds are for a pamphlet appearing in the local newspaper targeting adults and also for the pre-prom dinner, providing a discount for the tickets for 100 students.

Council Chairman Parella asked to know if the SAPTF gets funding from the State with Ms. Ursini responding that the Task Force gets \$27,000 from the State.

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Ms. Ursini described the remainder of the SAPTF program in great detail.

Councilman Stuart asked to know the reason for the request of \$5754 with Ms. Roy responding that this was intended as a match for the funds from the State.

Council Chairman Parella noted that the Town matches with in-kind facilities costs, etc.

Ms. Roy informed the Council that most towns match in cash and in-kind.

Council Chairman Parella stated that she believes that the in-kind match is sufficient.

Ms. Ursini informed the Council that she applied for a Federal grant.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

803 - Parks and Recreation
Walter V. Burke, Director

Recreation Director Burke handed out photos of the various parks.

Recreation Director Burke explained the need for a new dump truck body and that the cost of same is \$7000.

A discussion ensued regarding the dump truck.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know the cost of a new truck with Recreation Director Burke responding that a new truck costs \$30,000.

Council Chairman Parella stated that she suggested to Town Treasurer Goucher and Town Administrator Teixeira that funds should be set aside for Quinta-Gamelin. She further stated that she is concerned that there is no ramp-up for the costs and that it will become burdensome in the future.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know when the building ownership will be transferred to the Town with Recreation Director Burke responding that he believes the transfer to be one month away.

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A discussion ensued regarding the proposed recreation center.

Town Treasurer Goucher asked to know the capital requirement to "open the doors" with Recreation Director Burke responding that the fire suppression system is a priority.

Council Chairman Parella stated that there is money in the bond issue for some capital improvements but that she is concerned about operating costs.

Councilman Calouro suggested that the Operating and Utilities line items should be marked with asterisks (*).

Recreation Director Burke reported that he has four pending grant applications in the works:

1. Independence Park
2. Sports Complex Courts and Hockey
3. Sports Field Lighting
4. Trails

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if Recreation Director Burke plans a grant application for Quinta-Gamelin with Recreation Director Burke responding that there is a "whole bunch of opportunity" but that he may not apply unless the Town owns the building.

Councilman Herreshoff asked Recreation Director Burke to prepare a "white paper" on the anticipated repairs and operational costs.

Recreation Director Burke agreed to prepare the "white paper."

Councilman Stuart noted that there was a need for wood chips at the playgrounds with Recreation Director Burke noting that wood chips are included in the Operating line item every year.

Recreation Director Burke observed that his utilities have been running approximately \$2000 less than previously.

A discussion ensued regarding the development of a "passive park" at the corner of Wood and Hope Streets.

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Council Chairman Parella suggested that trees might be planted at Sowams Park to shade benches and picnic tables.

Recreation Director Burke agreed that the absence of trees causes park patrons to "cook" in the sun.

Councilman Sweeney suggested that the basketball court on the Town Common was in need of repair with Recreation Director Burke informing the Council that he plans to fill cracks and paint the court.

402 - Town Administrator

Antonio A. Teixeira, Town Administrator

A discussion ensued regarding the Departments Dues and Conferences line item with Town Administrator Teixeira responding that this is used by department heads and other certified employees to maintain their certification. It was noted that the Clerk has his own dues and conference account but that all others are covered by this one.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

403 - Town Clerk

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Town Clerk

A discussion ensued concerning the Clerk's salary with the Clerk explaining that when he assumed the office from former Town Clerk Diane Mederos, the Town Clerk's salary was the average of the full-time department managers. He noted that he has held the position for over eight years and that now his salary is much less than the average of the others. He asked that the salary should be restored to the average of the others.

The Council, by consensus, agreed to increase the Clerk's salary to \$77,084 per annum.

The Council made no other changes to this budget.

407 - Municipal Court

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Magistrate/Clerk

A discussion ensued regarding the Salaries line item with the Clerk noting that the Chief Judge's salary and the Clerk's salary has not been adjusted since 2006.

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The Council made no changes to this budget.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Stuart, seconded by Councilman Sweeney and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 10:05 o'clock PM.

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC
Council Clerk